



ANNUAL BRIDGE COURSE REPORT



April 2024-March 2025



“Preparing girls to fit in tomorrow’s advanced world through Bridge Course training”

[Based on the report prepared by Sr. Crescence and Nitesh Kumar, edited and reformatted by Saskia Raevouri]

General Information of the Organization



... and many generous donors!

*Sr. Mary Crescence
Director*

Title of the Project	Bridge Course Program
Name of the organization	Fakirana Sisters Society
Address of the organization	Fakirana Sisters' Society Banuchappar, Bettiah, West Champaran - 845438 Bihar, India.
Phone Email Fax	91-8862844435,9661447535 sr.crescence@gmail.com niteshsingh75@gmail.com Not available
Contact Person	Sr. Crescence, Nitesh Kumar
Location of the project	Bridge Course Sacred Heart Convent, Bettiah of West Champaran districts of Bihar
Project Duration	Ongoing
Reporting Period	1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

Staff



Nitesh Singh
Administrative in charge



Tannu Kumari
Teacher



Riya Kumari
Hostel Warden



Lalita Devi
Cook

Location of the project



The Bridge Course program is operated in a separate building and offices on the grounds of the Sacred Heart Convent in Bettiah, Bihar.

Selection of the candidates



The Bridge Course is a free residential program for poor girls with inborn talents and capacity for leadership. A survey of the FreeSchools World Literacy program (www.freeschools.org) carried out by us in 2010 showed that after class 4th or 5th 95% of the female students were deprived of further education. One reason was that the schools were at a great distance from their villages, but more was the society thinking: “Girls do not need education more than class five.” The Bridge Course is a one- or two-year remedial program to counteract the wrong thinking of society. It is a unique type of education conducted in Bettiah; there is no program similar to it in Bihar.

Only intellectual young and poor girls can be candidates for this program. These girls are chosen after class five in the FreeSchools program. In a very short period of two years they are given quality of education up to class 7th with modern methods and techniques. The Bridge Course focuses on developing their inborn talents and preparing them as confident, responsible, knowledgeable and vocal female leaders in today’s society. Its aim is not only to prepare them for exams but also to develop their all-round personalities.

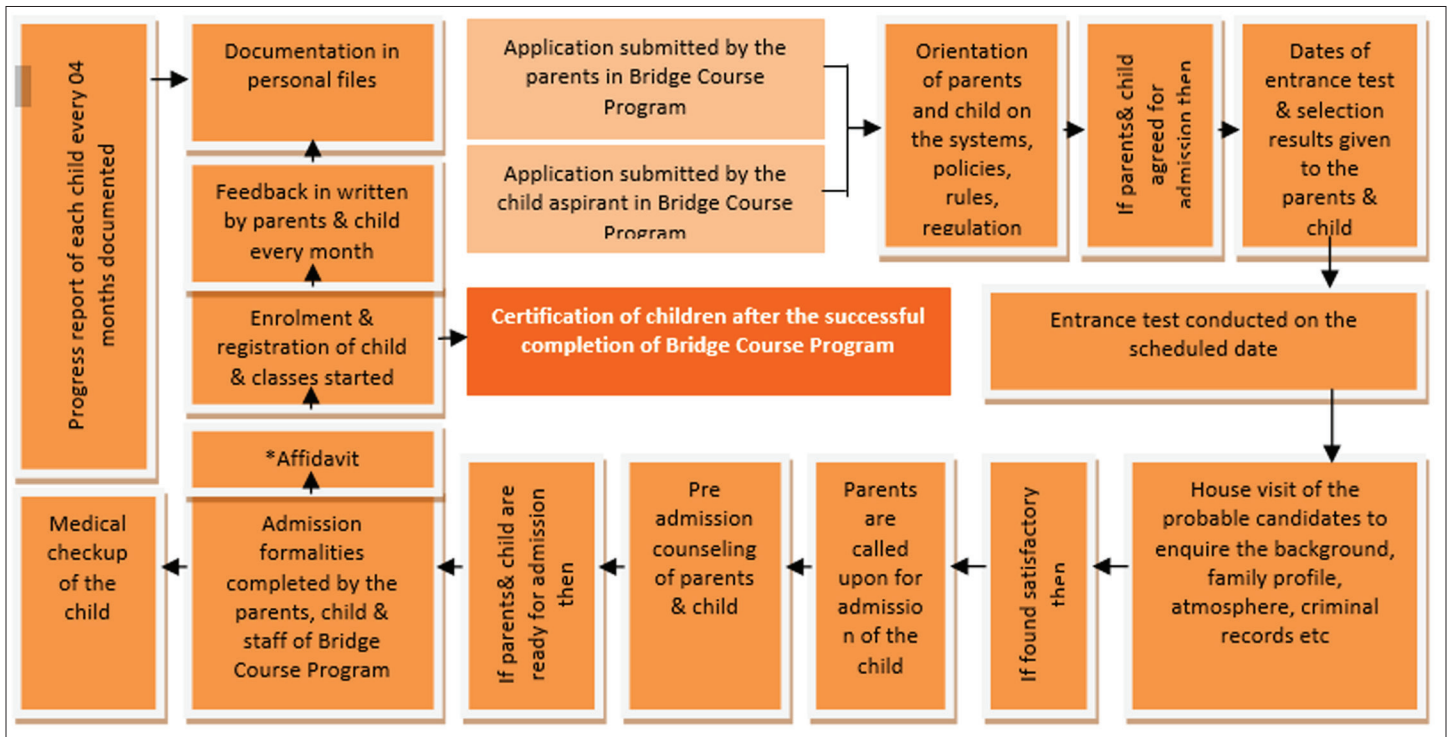
Each year, members of the Bridge Course staff travel to the various villages where FreeSchools operate, and from those students girls are selected through intellectual testing. After obtaining their parents' written permission, the girls are admitted into the Bridge Course program where they live in a dormitory with a maximum capacity of 18-21. All the necessities, such as bedding, food, books and study materials, are provided free of charge.

The designed and developed process of identification, selection and enrollment to find the right girls has enhanced the authenticity of the candidates. Parents and their daughters are also oriented and counseled at every stage about the Bridge Course Program—its rules, regulations, its objectives and mission.



After completing one year of Bridge Course, the girls find positive changes within themselves and feel inspired to be active instruments for the change of their society. Bridge Course completes in one year the requirements of class 7th. Girls who would go for normal education are sent home to continue their studies through local schools, and definitely 99% pass 10th in 1st division. Girls having extraordinary talents and capabilities are screened and kept for a second year of Bridge Course, being given class 8th and 9th courses and leadership training.

The selection process



For the 2024-2025 season, twenty girls were selected from different villages, mainly from Teluwa. The selection program began with a test in all subjects. The test paper was prepared by three staff and prior information was sent the girls a week before the date. Examination was conducted, papers corrected and successful candidates were called to join. Thus twenty girls were selected and the schedule of education began. The parents and children were given an orientation in the rules and regulations of the Bridge Course. The parents departed and children stayed.





Beneficiaries of the program 2024-2025



No	Name	Parent's Name	Village	Current status
1	Bindi Kumari	Rajdeep kumar yadav	Binwaliya	Studying in class 8 th
2	Nidhi Kumari	Niraj Sah	Belwa	Studying in class 8 th
3	Manju Kumari	Bhagwan Sahni	Teluwa	Studying in class 8 th
4	Roshani Kumari	Chandeshwar Parsadr	Dachni Teluwa	Studying in class 8 th
5	Sakshi Kumari	Bindeshwari kumar	Gora	Studying in class 8 th
6	Pushpa Kumari	Sanjay Sahni	Teluwa	Studying in class 8 th
7	Rinki Kumari	Birendra Sahni	Teluwa Purwari	Studying in class 8 th
8	Kajal Kumari	Santosh Paswan	Gonahi	Studying in class 8 th
9	Gudiya Kumari	Birendra Ram	Gonahi Sathi	Studying in class 7 th
10	Khusi Kumari	Santosh Sah	Lauriya	Studying in class 7 th
11	Suhani Kumari	Chandrsekhar Parsad	Kathrwatola	Studying in class 7 th
12	Nandni Kumari	Mukesh Kumar	Parsa bhwara	Studying in class 7 th
13	Nitu Kumari	Abnhya Ray	Chanpatiya	Studying in class 7 th
14	Khusi Kumari	Basant Singh	Teluwa	Studying in class 7 th
15	Nandani Kumari	Thag Sahani	Pachmi Teluwa	Studying in class 9 th
16	Khusi Kumari	Yogindera Sahni	Dachni Teluwa	Studying in class 9 th
17	Sanju Kumari	Bhagwan Sahni	Pachmi Gahri	Studying in class 9 th
18	Kiran Kumari	Chandeshwar Sahni	Dachini Gahri	Studying in class 9 th
19	Ishika Kumari	Subash Sahni	Purbari Teluwa	Studying in class 9 th
20	Roshni Kumari	Satnaryan Chaudhri	Nautan Parswani	Studying in class 9 th

Teaching



The method of teaching in the Bridge Course is far superior to the teaching in government schools or other private schools. It is modern, qualitative, expanded to improve the children's minds. By making the learning interesting for them we try to make them thinkers with a desire to become a great person one day. Within one or two months great changes are noticed in the girls.

Eating and Sleeping



Extra-curricular activities



Activities such as drawing, essay writing, letter writing, stage performance, etc. were also a major part of the syllabus this year. This was highly appreciated by the parents who they said their children had become so active!



Teachers' Day Celebration



The first program of the year was Teachers' Day, celebrated on 5th September 2024 in the office of the Bridge Course program. The celebration began at 10.30 am. Teachers, staff members, sisters and twenty Bridge Course girls took active participation in this event.

First of all, Sr. Crescence welcomed all the delegates, children, sisters, and teachers. One Bridge Course girl gave a small speech to all the teachers present after which a variety program was presented by the girls. The teachers and the sisters thoroughly appreciated their talent. Then a meal was served for both children and staff. Before it was over, Sister Crescence presented a gift to each of the teachers and a vote of thanks was given by Mr. Nitesh Kumar.

Celebration of Christmas



Christmas was celebrated in the Bridge Course Program on 24th December 2024. The hall was decorated and a small crib was prepared with the baby Jesus inside. Sr. Crescence lit the first candle followed by the girls who also lit candles. The children sang Gloria and played with balloons. We all shared Christmas cake. What a joy!

December 24, 2024

Dear Friends,

Loving greetings from all of us!

It's a joy that we have entered in the advent season and are preparing for the coming of the savior messiah. He will come with all his blessings to those who wait for him. We have to prepare our little hearts to welcome him. He will bless you and us with all his blessings. There is an additional joy; HOLY FATHER has declared this year to be the Jubilee Year, the year of great joy and great mercy from the Lord. Come let us prepare together.

Hope you all are keeping well and busy with your work. We are also keeping fine and excelling in our studies and work.

Bridge Course is doing marvels and what to say about FreeSchools--they are not less in their zeal and ambition to become something. The rest is ok. We send you, every one of you, lots of love. You are always in our prayers.

Much love,

Sr. Crescence

Outside visitors



During this year some important officers visited Bridge Course and they met the children and the staff. We showed them our simple style of living and the classes, and they asked questions of us. Among these officers were Mr. Saurav Kumar CBI (Central Bureau of investigation), Mr. Raj Anand (a child protection officer). Their remarks have shaken us. Mr Saurav Kumar said, “Today my whole thinking has collapsed. I had in mind that people do charity work for their name’s sake, they get foreign money to use for themselves, but now I think that was a mistake. What benefit does Sr. Crescence get for herself in developing these children, making them totally changed, bright, bold, thinkers, standing for justice and truth? She gets nothing for herself. But the work she does is praiseworthy.” Raj Anand said, “I never imagined that the poor village girls could be changed in this manner.”



Monthly review meeting of the project



During this year, regular staff meetings were conducted in which the director gave her suggestions, advice and input on how to improve the teaching. We do not only have to focus on the subjects but also on personality building and infusion of a better spirit in the girls. The main challenges that we staff face are the effects of village atmosphere, narrow thinking and wrong belief for the girls' education. This goes all through the years in our teaching and we see results after two years.

In addition, during the year parents come for meetings with Sr. Crescence and the staff.



The parents



[Left] Parents signing and handing over their daughters for a year in the Bridge Course program.

[Right and Below] Every holiday the parents come to take their daughters home, to satisfy authorities that the girl is handed over to the parents.



Terminal examinations conducted

Three terminal examinations were conducted for the 7th and 8th standard students during this year. In the first term exam, the girls are tested on becoming more polite; by the second term they get more ambition to study, and by the third term the responsibility of citizenship develops in them and they become thinkers, bold, and risk-taking.

Altogether 20 girls successfully completed the one-year Bridge Course program. Six girls joined class 9th and eight girls took admission in class 8th. The rest went for class 7th, all joining government or private schools. At the end of the year the girls are amazed to see the change in themselves. Naturally they are grateful to God, to the benefactors for the financial help, and to Sr. Crescence and the staff members for their hard work.

No	Name	1st term	2nd term	3rd term	
1	Pushpa Kumari	261	345	450	
2	Rinki Kumari	268	327	433	
3	Kajal Kumari	233	277	432	
4	Gudiya Kumari	265	329	440	
5	Suhani Kumari	213	359	450	
6	Nandni Kumari	262	304	403	
7	Nitu Kumari	228	387	437	
8	Khusi Kumari	247	398	488	
9	Nandani Kumari	275	306	459	
10	Khusi Kumari	249	399	435	
11	Sanju Kumari	212	372	497	
12	Kiran Kumari	229	382	496	
13	Ishika Kumari	205	377	442	
14	Roshni Kumari	215	389	438	
15	Bindi Kumari	249	302	492	
16	Nidhi Kumari	242	308	421	
17	Manju Kumari	241	305	421	
18	Roshani Kumari	242	302	411	
19	Sakshi Kumari	229	308	444	
20	Khusi Kumari	224	309	470	



Terminal exams being conducted

Dear Saskia Mam

We have completed Class 8th now we have to leave Bridge course and go home to study in 9th and 10th. Leave all our teachers Riya Teacher, Nilesh Sir and specially Sister crecence is very very painful please mam pray for us. Sr. crecence told us "keep up"

The name of Bridge course, Respect your teachers, Work Hard, leave together in love. Then you will be happy and get good result for. The love we received in Bridge course, we are grateful to the teacher and mostly to Sr. crecence and we are very very grateful to you mam. you gave us all help for our study. So our Hearts are grateful to you we will always pray for you. Yours lovingly

Jishika kumari, Sanju kumari,
Kiran kumari, Khushi kumari,
Roshni kumari, and Nandni kumari

Annual Day



The Annual Day celebration was held at the end of the school year. The variety entertainment program with such acts as song, dance, drama, and comic, were performed with enthusiasm by the girls and delighted the audience. At the end the outgoing girls received their certificates and prizes with touching votes of thanks, such as, “We will never forget Bridge Course and the staff,” “You have done a lot for us,” “To depart from you is heartbreaking.” We will never forget Saskia mam who is all in all for us. It is because of her help [*and of course the donors!—Ed.*] that our future has changed.





When the girls complete their studies, they are given a prize as a token of our love.



Praying to God Uncle for the recovery of Saskia mam [*who had Covid—ed.*].

Life-changing stories of Bridge Course achievement



POOJA KUMARI comes from a poor family in the village Turhapati in the Chanpatiya block of the West Champaran. She has no father and her mother was always sick, so there was no earning member in the family, yet somehow she managed to feed her two small brothers. Education for Pooja was out of question. Through a generous person she was introduced to the Bridge Course, passed the tests, and was admitted for the 2013-2014 year. At the end of class 8th she returned home and gave tuition to small children, collecting enough money to complete her private study of class 10th and graduation

pass in 1st division. More than that, she was topper in school! She now works for Jeevika (Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society) as a field officer.

RANI KUMARI (20) and **NIKKI KUMARI** (19) are sisters who were enrolled in the Bridge Course year 2014-15. They are from the Machaha village of Turhapatti Panchayat of Yogapatti block of West Champaran. Their father, Mr. Shiv Kumar Sah, is a simple farmer with a small patch of agricultural land growing paddy and wheat and feeding his family with difficulties. Sometimes he works on others' fields as a laborer to meet expenses. Their mother stays at home and takes care of the other children, two girls and one boy. Rani and Nikki came to the Bridge Course and joined class 7th, where they studied class 7th and 8th. After class 8th they were admitted to St. Teresa's Girls' High School in Bettiah, where they completed class 9th, 10th, and Intermediate with good results. They joined BSC Nursing (Bachelor of Science) and are now both employed at a private hospital.



This is what Bridge course does. Thanks to God and thanks to the teachers, and above all a big thank you to our donors!

History of the Bridge Course program

by Saskia Raevouri, Bridge Course Fundraiser

In 2006, during my first visit to Bettiah to visit the FreeSchools, Sr. Crescence told me of her dream of remodeling an old structure on the convent grounds into a dormitory to house, each year, 18 of the poorest but brightest girls from the FreeSchools background and prepare them to qualify for “bridging over” to the formal schools. At the same time these girls—who would otherwise be married off at an early age—would learn social skills and be exposed to a higher standard of living, acquiring habits they could take back to inspire and educate their primitive villagers. Additionally they would form bonds with each other, leading to high-level cross-fertilization between remote villages.

I thought it a wonderful idea and pledged my support, taking around two years to raise the building funds. By March 2010 the building was complete and, together with Geri Johnson (president of FreeSchools-USA) and Dr. John Lange, we visited Bettiah to cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony of the Bridge Course Program.

Each year since then, Sr. Crescence and her staff have acted as “talent scouts,” identifying the most promising girls between seven and eleven

years of age and putting them and their parents through an extensive screening process before granting them admission to the program.

Our annual goal (from \$7500 in 2010 to \$12,500 in 2025) covers room and board for 18-20 girls, salaries for an administrative assistant, two teachers, a hostel warden, a cook, an honorarium for Sr. Crescence, study materials, textbooks, stationery for exams, toilet articles, medical expenses, sporting equipment, meeting and office expenses, travel allowance (for the girls to visit their families), audit fees, and dormitory maintenance including electricity and other utilities. So far we have managed to reach our goal each year!

Sr. Crescence and her Sacred Heart sisters have taken vows of poverty, are self-supporting and receive nothing from the Catholic Church or the government, refusing to consort with corruption, bribery, and other practices that are common in India when money is involved. The sisters and their staff do the work, and the only help we as Westerners can offer is financial. Those of us who have personally visited the FreeSchools and Bridge Course programs can vouch that every cent raised by us goes toward the cause.



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Director: Sr. Mary Crescence



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